

Guns in the Home

Less than half of the U.S. families with children and guns store their guns unloaded and locked away.

Children and teens are at the greatest risk of unintentional deaths, injuries and suicides from guns. It is normal for young children to be curious. They explore in drawers, cabinets and closets. Some older children and teens are attracted to guns and see them as signs of power.

Each year in Washington state, about 25 children are hospitalized and four to five die due to unintentional gun injuries. Most of these shootings occur in or around the home.

Should I talk to my child about guns?

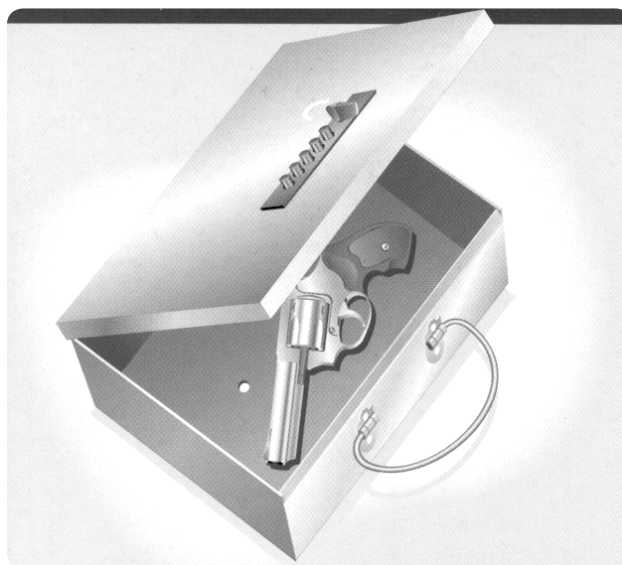
Yes! It's better to talk about it before your child or teen comes across a gun at home or somewhere else.

- Talk with your child about the risk of gun injury in places they may visit or play.
- Teach your child that if they find a gun they should leave it alone, leave the room and tell an adult right away.
- Talk with your child about guns and violence. Let them know that strong feelings like fear and anger can be expressed without using weapons.

How do I store a gun safely?

Safe storage of guns works to protect everyone in the home. Use this checklist:

- ☐ Store guns unloaded and locked.
- ☐ Store and lock bullets in a separate place.
- ☐ Use a gun safe, locked box, trigger or chamber lock to store guns.



- ☐ Avoid locking devices that use keys if possible. Children often know where keys are kept.
- ☐ Ask family and friends to use these safe storage steps.
- ☐ Remove guns from your home if a family member is depressed, suicidal or is abusing drugs or alcohol.

How can I help keep my child safe at other homes?

Guns are present in about one-third of U.S. homes. Before you send your child to someone's house, ask if guns in the home are stored unloaded and locked. Ask if the bullets are stored separately. Ask about shotguns and rifles, too, not just handguns.

If you have doubts about the safety of someone else's home, invite the children to play at your home instead.

How do I ask others about safe gun storage?

Many of us feel awkward asking other people how they handle gun safety. Here are some tips to help:

- Ask about guns along with other things you discuss before your child goes to play at someone's home, such as booster seat and seat belt use, allergies and animals.
- Work through groups. Share information on safe gun storage with your child's preschool, childcare or local PTA. See the resources in the "To Learn More" section for help.
- Present your concerns with respect (see the following examples).

Finding the right words can be hard. Here's a start...

- "I don't mean any disrespect, but knowing how curious my child can be, I feel I have to ask this question..."
- "I hope you don't mind me asking if you have a gun in your home and if it is properly stored..."
- "Mom, Dad, _____, this is awkward for me and I mean no disrespect. I am concerned Susie will find one of the guns in your home when we visit. Do you keep them locked up with the bullets stored separately?"

The "asking about guns" information was developed by the ASK (Asking Saves Kids) campaign sponsored by PAX. Revised with permission by Seattle Children's Hospital.

To Learn More

- LOK-IT-UP website: www.lokitup.org
- For an ASK Parent Help Kit that includes tips on how to talk about the subject, sample answers to defensive reactions and ideas for community support, go to www.askingsaveskids.com or call 212-983-8705.
- www.seattlechildrens.org
- Your child's healthcare provider

Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call Marketing Communications at 206-987-5205 or 206-987-2280 (TTY).

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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